

An open letter to Members of the NSW Parliament

The decision of the Parliament of NSW to table and debate the decriminalisation of abortion is a critical one, affecting people across our community. The Uniting Church notes the support from a wide diversity of members of Parliament, including the Premier, Gladys Berejiklian. The statement below draws from a series of decisions made over the last thirty years in the Uniting Church in Australia.*

The Uniting Church affirms that human life is God-given from the beginning. We believe that all human beings are made in the image of God and that we are called to respect the sacredness of life.

We also believe Christians are called to respond to life with compassion and generosity.

When abortion is practised indiscriminately it damages respect for human life. However, we live in a broken world where people face difficult decisions. Respect for the sacredness of life means advocating for the needs of women as well as every unborn child.

We reject two extreme positions: that abortion should never be available; and that abortion should be regarded as simply another medical procedure. It is not possible to hold one position that can be applied in every case because people's circumstances will always be unique.

It is important that women have the space they need to make this difficult decision after careful consideration and that they should have access to high quality counselling, pastoral care and medical services.

Women must be free to discuss their situation before they make a decision. The Church needs to be a place where such discussion can happen. We can offer spiritual, moral and pastoral support, without judgement, to a woman at this time.

Whilst we encourage our Ministers to remind people of the sacredness of life, the Church's role should be to offer care and support leading up to and following a decision, not stand in judgement.

Our Church is also committed to support women who continue their pregnancy, and help them within the community.

The Uniting Church is disturbed that recent comments could imply that women make the decision to have an abortion without proper consideration. Most women who have abortions do so only after a great deal of searching and anguish. There are a range of well-informed spiritual, medical and emotional support services available to women and it is offensive to imply that these decisions are made lightly or without access to suitable consultation.

The decision to have an abortion is not just a moral issue but a social one. While some aspects of the current debate attempt to pass moral judgement on the act itself, it ignores the many emotional, physical, financial and social issues that often create a situation where a woman is forced to consider an abortion.

The Uniting Church asserts that abortion is a health and social issue and should not be a criminal issue.

The Uniting Church hopes that those engaged in this debate do not lose sight of the complexity of the issues.



Rev. Simon Hansford
Moderator
Uniting Church in Australia,
Synod of NSW & ACT

* <https://assembly.uca.org.au/news/item/309-uniting-church-calls-for-compassion-and-balance-on-abortion-debate>
<https://nswact.uca.org.au/media/7447/statement-on-abortion-minute-207-93s-1992.pdf>